

Although whites accounted for the majority of AIDS cases in Tennessee, the proportion of cases represented by blacks has increased over the last decade. In 1985, blacks comprised 20% of all AIDS cases; by 1994, this figure had more than doubled to 46 percent (Figure 2.3.3). Preliminary data for 1995 suggest a further increase in the proportion of AIDS cases represented by blacks to nearly half of all AIDS cases, while blacks comprise only around 16% of the Tennessee population. Since cases in races other than blacks and whites are a small proportion of all cases in Tennessee, the increase in the proportion of AIDS cases in blacks complements a corresponding decline in the proportion of AIDS cases in whites.

This shift in the AIDS epidemic from whites to minorities in Tennessee parallels a similar trend nationwide. CDC reports that in 1995 the proportion of persons reported with AIDS who were black was the same as the proportion who were white (40%), and that the reported AIDS incidence rate among blacks (92.6 per 100,000) was six times that of whites (15.4) and double that of Hispanics (46.2). Nationwide rates were lowest among American Indians/Alaska Natives (12.3) and Asians/Pacific Islanders (6.2).²⁰

The number and proportion of adult and adolescent AIDS cases in persons who are black is shown in Table 2.3.1 for each of the fourteen Health Department Regions. Regions whose blacks constitute the highest percentage of AIDS cases were Shelby County (60%), followed by Southwest Tennessee (48%) and Madison County (42%). Upper Cumberland had the lowest percentage of AIDS cases among blacks (4%).

AIDS is over-represented among blacks in every region relative to the distribution of blacks in the total population of the region. Statewide, 2.3 times more blacks have been diagnosed with AIDS than would be expected based on their share of the State's population. Four regions had high ratios of AIDS cases to population among blacks. Northeast Tennessee had a 5.5 ratio of the proportion of blacks with AIDS to the proportion of blacks in the region's population. Sullivan County and East Tennessee had ratios of 4.5. In Upper Cumberland Tennessee, blacks were four times more likely to be diagnosed with AIDS than their representation in the population would lead one to expect.

2.3.3. Distribution of AIDS Cases by Age at AIDS Diagnosis

Overall, the highest number of AIDS cases were diagnosed among Tennesseans aged 30-34. The fewest cases were diagnosed in the oldest age-groups (65 and over) and the youngest (under 19). Table 2.3.2 shows age at diagnosis with AIDS as a percent of all Tennessee AIDS cases overall and for males and females. Eighty percent of all AIDS cases among males diagnosed from 1982 to 1995 involved persons between ages 25 and 44. Seventy-two percent of females were between these ages at AIDS

²⁰ CDC. *HIV/AIDS Surveillance Report*. 1995; 7,2:5.